



## Protecting Water Quality

Ecology protects area water quality in many ways, including setting limits on the amount of pollutants industries and cities can release in their wastewater; working with agriculture to prevent chemicals and dairy waste from getting into streams; and preparing cleanup plans for polluted lakes, rivers and streams.

One of the most difficult water quality issues is dealing with pollution that comes from all of us. This pollution is commonly called “non-point source” because it doesn’t come from one source like a factory. Instead, it comes from many sources at once like the oil and gas run-off from our roads and pesticides and fertilizers from our lawns. Ecology is working closely with local governments, tribes, and the federal government to develop ways to solve this problem.

To limit the amount of pollutants a particular business can discharge with its wastewater, Ecology inspects the facility and issues permits.

In the Lower Duwamish area, Ecology is responsible for overseeing:

- **73 industrial storm-water permits**
- **10 industrial process-water permits**
- **One surface-water discharge permit**

## For More Information

The Department of Ecology provides its services through its headquarters in Olympia, plus four regional offices and five field offices. The agency oversees nearly 150 state and federal environmental laws.

The Lower Duwamish is located within the area served by Ecology’s Northwest Regional Office, located in Bellevue. This office is responsible for environmental-protection and compliance activities in seven counties: Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom.

If you would like more information, please contact:

Sheila Hosner	Email: <a href="mailto:shos461@ecy.wa.gov">shos461@ecy.wa.gov</a>
Public Outreach Coordinator	Phone: (425) 649-7071
Department of Ecology	Fax: (425) 649-7098
3190 160 <sup>th</sup> Ave. SE	TDD: (425) 649-4259
Bellevue, WA 98008-5452	

*Ecology is an equal opportunity agency. If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program at (360) 407-6700 (voice) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).*

# Focus

## Ecology Activities In Seattle’s Lower Duwamish Area

### Background

People living and working near the Duwamish River in south Seattle are concerned about a variety of environmental issues in their neighborhoods, including air quality; the recent listing of the Lower Duwamish Waterway as a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “Superfund” site; and groundwater contamination in Georgetown from past activities at the Philip Services Corp. site, a licensed waste-handling facility.

The Department of Ecology is currently working to improve the environment in Seattle’s Lower Duwamish area. Activities include:

- Working with businesses to reduce their use of toxic and hazardous materials and making sure hazardous wastes are managed and disposed of properly.
- Providing grants to local governments and citizen groups so they can create or participate in environmental activities.
- Overseeing the cleanup of contaminated sites.
- Regulating surface water discharges from industries.
- Monitoring air quality.

### Hazardous-Waste Compliance And Reducing Toxic Materials

#### Compliance With Hazardous-Waste Regulations

Businesses that produce hazardous wastes are required to register with Ecology as “generators.” The agency makes sure these businesses handle and dispose of their waste properly. Ecology also regulates facilities that treat, store or dispose of hazardous waste, such as Philip Services Corp. in Georgetown.

There are hundreds of businesses in King County that use or produce hazardous materials, so Ecology often shares oversight responsibility with local governments. In the Lower Duwamish area alone, Ecology inspectors oversee about 100 of the largest hazardous waste generating businesses, and King County is responsible for the smaller ones.

Ecology hazardous-waste inspectors make unannounced site visits to generators. Inspectors thoroughly investigate how each business handles its hazardous materials, from purchase to disposal. Any problems are noted and follow-up visits made to make sure problems are fixed.

October 2001

## Toxics Reduction

Ecology also works with businesses to help them economically reduce their use of toxic materials and still produce quality products. By using fewer toxic materials, businesses produce less hazardous waste, help to protect the environment, improve worker safety and become better neighbors.

Approximately 55 businesses in the Lower Duwamish area work with Ecology's toxics-reduction group. Success stories include:

- **Birmingham Steel** — In 1999, this company won the Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention and has been designated a "Distinguished Business in the Green" by King County. Birmingham recycles about 650,000 tons of scrap steel a year, including used oil filters and paint cans. It developed a unique recycling furnace that reduces air pollutants.
- **Ace Galvanizing** — Ace won the Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention in 1998. It has reduced air emissions by enclosing its galvanizing kettles. The firm also reduced the amount of hazardous waste it produces by 85 percent and saves more than 10,000 gallons of water a week through recycling.

## Cleaning Up Toxic-Waste Sites

Ecology is also responsible for overseeing the cleanup of contaminated soils, groundwater and aquatic sediments and works to prevent these materials from re-contaminating the environment. Soil contamination most often comes from leaking underground storage tanks. However, air-borne pollutants, such as arsenic and lead from the now-closed copper smelter in Tacoma, can also contaminate soils.

Excluding residences, there are about 220 sites in the Lower Duwamish that are either in the process of or have been identified as needing cleanup. Sites include the riverbed of the Lower Duwamish Waterway, which has become contaminated through industrial activity, as well as from polluted storm-water runoff and sewage spills.

Ecology directly oversees some of the site cleanups, but most are conducted independently, with Ecology review. For some very large sites, Ecology also works closely with EPA. Generally, property owners or those who caused the pollution pay for most cleanups. Recent cleanup activities in the Lower Duwamish include:

- **Overseeing Harbor Island Arco Tank Farm cleanup** — Approximately 12,000 gallons of contaminated water and dissolved oil products, and tons of petroleum-contaminated soils have been removed from this site. Clean up of soil and groundwater is continuing.
- **Planning for the cleanup of the contaminated sediments of the Lower Duwamish Waterway** with EPA, the Muckleshoot Tribe, community groups and other regulatory agencies. For more information, go to <http://www.epa.gov/region10>.
- **Conducting a soil sampling study** with Seattle-King County public health in South Park near the Long Painting facility to learn whether soils were contaminated.

## Monitoring Air Quality

Along with local clean air agencies and EPA, Ecology coordinates clean-air protection in Washington state. Ecology's primary activities are air-quality monitoring and the motor vehicle Emission Check program. Air-quality monitoring takes place at testing stations across the state.

There are several stations in the Duwamish Valley. Information from this testing can be seen on the Internet at <http://airr.ecy.wa.gov>. This information is used to design ways to improve or maintain air quality, such as regulating industrial emissions; restricting wood stove use and increasing motor-vehicle testing.

Currently, Ecology is participating in a national air-toxics study. Two of the sampling stations for this project are in south Seattle — one in Georgetown and one on Beacon Hill. This study is testing for chemicals in the air that could be harmful to human health. The first year of sampling was completed in spring of 2001 and the study will continue for two or three more years.

## Managing Solid Waste

Simply put, solid waste is what people throw away. Ecology helps make sure that what is thrown away is handled properly, through disposal in environmentally safe landfills. Ecology also helps local governments promote waste reduction and recycling by providing financial assistance.

Ecology employees working on solid-waste issues certify the safe design and operation of landfills, hire youth to pick up litter on the state's roadways through the Ecology Youth Corps program, and provide grants to citizen groups for environmental activities.

Recent solid-waste and financial-assistance activities in the Lower Duwamish area include:

- **A grant of \$50,000 to the Georgetown Community Council** so it can participate in the review of Philip Services Corporation's application for a renewal of its Georgetown hazardous-waste facility's permit, and the groundwater cleanup in the Georgetown area.
- **Providing technical assistance to King County government** for the redevelopment of the old South Park Landfill.
- **A grant of \$60,000 to People for Puget Sound** to involve the community and other stakeholders in decision-making for the clean up of the riverbed of the Lower Duwamish Waterway.